# A Draft Platform for Action

## Integrating women in the sustainable development process:

**Agenda 21** contains a set of guidelines on ways to integrate women in the process of sustainable development, including action to:

- Increase the proportion of women in programmes for sustainable development involving decision-making, planning, and technical management and control of environmental degradation.
- Issue, by the year 2000, a strategy for eliminating various obstacles, including constitutional and legal, to women's full participation in sustainable development and public life.
- Disseminate gender-relevant knowledge and promote the enhanced value of women's roles through education.
- Develop environmentally sound technology in consultation with women.
- Develop programmes, especially in industrialized countries, of consumer awareness to promote sustainable pattern of consumption.

For the full text of the **Draft Platform for Action**, please write to: Planning and Special Programmes Section, Department of Public Information, Room S-955, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel: 212-963-1742, Fax: 212-963-4556, or the Division for the Advancement of Women, Room DC2-1220, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA. Tel: 212- 963-8385, Fax: 212-963-3463

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# Ten Critical Areas of Concern

## THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON women
## 4 - 15 SEPTEMBER 1995, BEIJING, CHINA

The Fourth World Conference on Women will be held in Beijing, China from 4 to 15 September 1995. Convened by the United Nations, this inter-governmental Conference will adopt **A Platform for Action**, concentrating on "critical areas of concern" that have been identified as obstacles to the advancement of women in the world, and set an agenda for the advancement of women at national and international levels into the next century. The Platform will reflect the review and appraisal of the advancement of women based on the objectives laid out in the **Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000** in 1985.

The Beijing Conference comes 20 years after the first world conference on women, held in Mexico City in 1975. The threefold themes of the conference, Equality, Development and Peace, later became the themes of the United Nations Decade for Women, 1976-1985. In 1980, a mid-Decade conference, held in Copenhagen, added three sub-themes: Education, Employment and Health. In Nairobi, at the third world conference on women, in 1985, these themes were incorporated in the **Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.**

To facilitate wider discussion of the Conference agenda, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which is the Preparatory Committee for the Beijing Conference, has circulated **A Draft Platform for Action**. It lists ten critical areas of concern for today's women, identifies strategic objectives derived from them and proposes actions to be taken nationally and internationally. The draft is being discussed in meetings at international, regional and national levels. Views and recommendations of the meetings will be reviewed in New York at the third preparatory meeting for the Conference (March 15–4 April 1995) before the **Platform for Action** undergoes final negotiations by delegates in Beijing.

**Ten Critical Areas of Concern: Suggested Actions**

## 1. Poverty

Due in large part to prolonged global economic crisis and structural adjustments, failure of governmental anti-poverty initiatives and civil strife in many parts of the world, there has been a substantial increase in the number of people living in absolute poverty. Women bear a disproportionate share of this burden. Their access to economic and other resources is considerably less than that of men. They manage household consumption under increasing scarcity, often having to make adjustments which are largely invisible. The number of female-headed households with dependents is also on the rise.

◆ Women constitute nearly 60 per cent of the world's one billion rural poor.
◆ The total number of rural women living in poverty was estimated in 1988 to be 564 million. This is an increase of 47 per cent above the numbers in 1965-1970.
◆ One-third of families worldwide are headed by women. The highest proportion of female-headed households in developing countries is recorded for Africa, followed by the least developed countries as a group, with 23 per cent.
◆ In the US, almost half of all poor families are supported by women with no spouse present, and their average income is 23 per cent below the official poverty line.

### Enabling women to overcome poverty:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Promote women's economic self-reliance and increase their access to quality education and health services. Aim for a target of 50 per cent reduction in populations living in extreme poverty by the year 2000.
◆ Develop gender-sensitive national and international policies.
◆ Provide poor women with economic opportunities.
◆ Provide rural women with equal access to productive resources, including legal access to land, provision of credit and extension services.
◆ Address the needs of migrant and displaced women.

## 2. Education and Health

Though a rough parity in enrollment has been achieved for girls and boys at the primary level, almost two thirds of all illiterate people in the world are women. Girls continue to be denied quality education, especially in such fields as science and technology. Drop-out rates among girls are also much higher than among boys. Due to structural adjustments in some economies, women's access to primary health care has been reduced. Because of absence in the past of access to information on prevention, women are increasingly becoming infected with HIV/AIDS.

◆ Of the 905 million illiterates in 1990, 587 million (or 65 per cent) were women, most of them in rural areas.
◆ In much of South Asia and the Middle East, only one student in three is a woman.
◆ Of the 130 million out-of-school children in 1990, 81 million were girls.
◆ In developing countries, the ratio of boys and girls going to school is roughly the same at the primary and secondary levels. However, at the tertiary level, boys usually outnumber girls.
◆ For every 100 male third-level students in scientific and technical fields, there are only 28 females in Spain, 25 in Austria and 29 in Canada
◆ Women now constitute 40 per cent of HIV-infected adults. By the year 2000, more than 14 million women may become infected with the virus, of whom about 4 million may die.
◆ Each year at least half a million women die from complications due to pregnancy and another 100,000 due to unsafe abortions.

### Ensuring quality education and better health care for women:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Achieve education for all by removing gender disparities. Allocate necessary funds and promote affirmative action with regard to equality in enrollment and educational opportunities.
◆ Take measures to help women and girls to enter such fields as science and technology.
◆ Make education gender-sensitive by removing social stereotypes from curricula, textbooks and training materials.
◆ Provide adequate financing to ensure primary health care services for women. Make efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, recognizing gender factors and growing impact on women.
◆ Reduce infant and maternal mortality rates by half and promote reproductive health and family planning programmes.
◆ Encourage and support research on women's health.

## 3. Violence

Violence against women is a global problem. Linked to male power, privilege and control, it is abetted by ignorance, lack of prohibitive laws and inadequate efforts by public authorities to enforce existing laws.

◆ In the US, a woman is beaten every 18 minutes; between three and four million are battered each year.
◆ In India, five women are burned in dowry-related disputes each day.
◆ In Papua New Guinea, 67 per cent of women are victims of domestic violence.

### Eliminating violence against women:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Recognize violence against women as a violation of women's human rights.
◆ Address the root causes of violence against women by underlining its links to male power and control. Study it as an issue of gender inequality and human rights, requiring improvement of the status of women and their empowerment. Adopt measures by Governments to promote community education.
◆ Take integrated measures, including legal and social, to prevent violence and protect women. Develop legislation based on the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Encourage legal literacy and develop educational materials explaining why violence against women is criminal behaviour.
◆ Adopt special measures to eliminate trafficking in women and to eradicate violence against those who are vulnerable (e.g. women with disabilities and migrant workers).

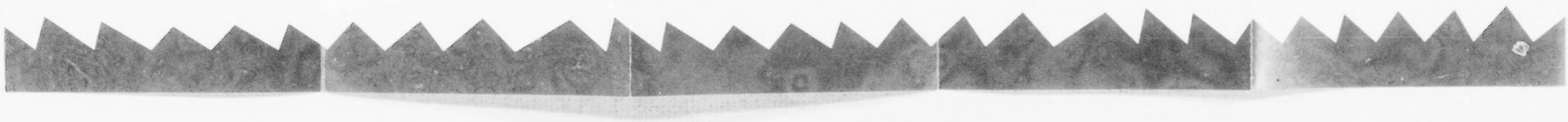
## 4. Armed and Other Conflicts

At times of national or international armed conflicts, women are affected in many ways. Though they may have no role in the decisions leading to such conflicts and seldom are combatants themselves, women are often left to maintain families when social and economic life is disrupted. Women often are also victims of torture, disappearance and systematic rape as a weapon of war.

◆ Women and their dependents constitute 80 per cent of the world's 18 million refugees.

### Protecting women from armed and other conflicts:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Increase women's participation in conflict resolution.
◆ Bring more women into peace-keeping, in both civilian and military roles.
◆ Reinforce women's roles in peace education, in both society and family.
◆ Take renewed steps to prevent violence against women refugees and displaced women.



# women:

## 5. Economic Disparity

Though women are primary producers of food and contribute significantly to economic life, they are largely excluded from decision-making on economic issues. In most societies, they lack equal access to, and control over, various means of production, including land, capital and technology, and their work is underpaid and undervalued. However, experience shows that, when given access to resources, technology and training, women can take the lead in expanding production.

◆ If women's housework were properly remunerated and included in national income figures, the world's gross national product would increase by 20 to 30 per cent.
◆ Women now represent 41 per cent of all workers in developed countries, 34 per cent worldwide. Their wages, however, are 30 to 40 per cent less than those of men for comparable work.

### Promoting women's economic self-reliance:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Take positive actions to help women overcome barriers, including targeting women in job programmes, providing on-the-job and introducing training in non-traditional areas of work. Promote their access to technology, markets and trade.
◆ Promote equal pay for work of equal value.
◆ Create a supportive work environment, including parental leave and part-time work with benefits and flexible hours.
◆ Eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace.

## 6. Politics

Though more women today are more visible in politics, they still lack access to power structures that shape society. Women also do not participate fully as top-level diplomats or in international organizations. Due to existing norms and practices, women are unable to compete fairly for leadership positions. Negative stereotypes contribute to such discrimination.

◆ In 1993, there were only six female heads of Government worldwide.
◆ At the UN, only six of the 184 Member countries have a woman Permanent Representative.
◆ More than 100 countries have no women in parliament at all.
◆ Developing countries have a better record of women's parliamentary representation (12 per cent) than the industrialized nations (9 per cent).

### Promoting women's participation in decision-making:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Develop actions to ensure women's full and equal participation at the family, community and higher levels of decision-making.
◆ Develop education and training related to women's participation in decision-making.
◆ Take legislative and administrative actions to ensure equality of opportunity for women to enter public service and private sector.
◆ Take temporary positive measures on a voluntary or mandatory basis to appoint women and men on an equal basis to decision-making positions.
◆ Develop appropriate social support facilities to enable men and women ease to reconcile family and public responsibilities and roles.
◆ Disseminate information about participation of women in decision-making.

## 7. National and International Institutions

Though national institutions for the advancement of women have been created in most countries, they often lack financial and human resources to perform adequately. Similar problems exist at the international level. Information and statistics desegregated by sex are also inadequate.

◆ In 1982, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) redefined *economically active population* as all persons of either sex who provide labour for the production of economic goods and services. In India, for example, initial estimates of only 33 per cent economically active women were revised upwards to 88 per cent as a result of this redefinition.
◆ **The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics**, compiled and prepared by the UN Statistical Office, presents gender-segregated social trends and statistics.

### Integrating gender equality dimensions into policy and planning:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Establish information-gathering, dissemination and monitoring mechanisms to encourage mainstreaming of gender equality.
◆ Collect and disseminate statistics showing gender impact of policies and programmes.
◆ Strengthen national institutions for the advancement of women.
◆ Develop tools for gender analysis and apply them in developing policies and programmes.

## 8. Human Rights

Women may have rights but are often unable to exercise them fully due to a lack of awareness of existing international and national laws and absence of commitment by Governments and communities to uphold them. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women sets international standards to prevent discrimination against women. In many countries national laws reflect these standards and women increasingly use the legal system to exercise their rights. But in other countries women's *de jure* equality is not yet secure and many have not ratified the Convention. The problem is compounded due to lack of appropriate recourse mechanisms at the national and international levels.

◆ To date, 133 countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

### Promoting women's human rights:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Make information on human rights more effective. Provide information on the rule and de facto situation of women to intergovernmental bodies monitoring these treaties.
◆ Take steps to implement international norms in national practice. Enact laws to safeguard women's rights and set up mechanisms to monitor them.
◆ Improve legal literacy through information campaign and national training programmes on women's rights under existing legal systems.

## 9. Mass Media

The mass media in most countries still provide a distorted picture of women, their role and contribution in a changing society. Relying on stereotyped images, they reinforce outdated views. The media are generally controlled by men and reflect their values and perceptions.

◆ Women's overall share of jobs in all media is low. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, the female average is below 25 per cent for the broadcasting and the press. In Europe it reaches 30 per cent for the press and 36 per cent for broadcasting.
◆ Women are rarely placed in top media jobs. Studies by UNESCO of 200 media organisations in 30 countries worldwide show that only 7 are headed by women.
◆ A 10-country study by UNESCO shows that only 1.4 per cent of TV news items deal with women's issues, and three-quarters of these are presented by men.

### Enhancing media's role to promote gender equality:

The Draft Platform for Action proposes to:
◆ Take steps to ensure women's access to information and the media on an equal basis.
◆ Encourage elimination of gender stereotyping through studies, campaigns and various forms of self-regulation by media organizations.

## 10. Environment and Development

Due to their responsibility in obtaining water and fuel and in managing household consumption, women, particularly in developing countries, are especially concerned with the quality and sustainability of the environment. Yet, because women are largely absent from decision-making, environmental policies often do not take into account the close links between their daily lives and the environment. **Agenda 21**, adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (June 1992), highlights women's role in environment and sustainable development.

◆ Women account for half of the food production in developing countries. In some African countries, they have to walk 10 kilometres or more to fetch water and fuel.
◆ Much of the soil conservation in East Africa over the past decades has been carried out by women.
◆ In India, women provide 75 per cent of the labour for transplanting and weeding rice, 60 per cent for harvesting and 33 per cent for threshing.

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